CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A document retrieval system including a user search interface, the system comprising:

a document information display means for displaying document identification information received as the results of an initial search;

a means for selecting at least a portion of the contents of a document identified by the document identification information displayed by the document information display means;

a search button for initiating a subsequent document retrieval using said selected document contents as a query; and

a means for modifying and confirming a Boolean expression that associates a plurality of words included in said query.

2. The document retrieval system of Claim 1, further comprising:

a document content display means for displaying the contents of documents identified by the document identification information displayed by the document information display means.

3. The document retrieval system of Claim 1, further comprising:

a database selecting part for selecting at least one database to be searched in said subsequent document retrieval, wherein said at least one database is selected from a plurality of databases including keyword-search-type databases and associative-document-search-type databases.

4. The document retrieval system of Claim 3, further comprising:

summarizing means for generating topic words for at least a selected portion of a document.

5. The document retrieval system of Claim 1, wherein said initial search is a keyword search and said subsequent document retrieval is an associative-document-type search.

SUB A1 6. A document retrieval system including a user search interface, the system comprising:

a document information display part for displaying document information received as search results;

a topic word display part for displaying topic words included in a document referenced in the document information display part;

word selecting means for selecting words displayed in the topic word display part; and

a first search start button for initiating a document retrieval by using the words selected by said word selecting means as a first query.

7. The document retrieval system of Claim 6, further comprising:

a means for modifying and confirming a Boolean expression that associates a plurality of words included in said first query.

8. The document retrieval system of Claim 6, further comprising:

a database selecting part for selecting at least one database to be searched from a plurality of databases including keyword-search-type databases and associative-document-search-type databases.

9. The document retrieval system as described in Claim 8, further comprising:

a means for sending information about the selected databases to be searched and query information to a search server.

10. The document retrieval system of Claim 8, further comprising:

a keyword input part for inputting keywords for a keyword search;

document selecting means for selecting documents referenced in the document information display part; and

a second search button for initiating a document retrieval using a document selected by the document selecting means as a second query.

11. The document retrieval system as described in Claim 10, further comprising:

document content display means for displaying the contents of a document referenced in the document information display part;

means for registering at least a portion of a document displayed by the document content display means; and

a third search button for initiating a document retrieval by using said registered portion as a third query.

12. The document retrieval system of Claim 6, wherein said topic words are automatically generated on a search server by a summarizing means.

13. A document retrieval method, comprising the steps of:

receiving search results from a search server identifying at least one document;

specifying at least a part of a document identified in said search results as a query for a database search;

sending a search request to said search server requesting to search at least one keyword-type database using said query;

modifying and confirming a Boolean expression created by said search server which associates words in said query; and

sending said confirmed Boolean expression to said search server.

14. A document retrieval method, comprising the steps of:

sending a request to perform a keyword search in at least one keyword-search-type database;

receiving document identification information as search results;

specifying at least a part of the contents of the identified search result documents; and

sending a search request to perform a document retrieval in at least one associative-document-search-type database using at least a part of said specified document contents as a query.

15. A document retrieval method, comprising the steps of:

sending a request to perform a document retrieval from at least one associative-document-search-type database;

receiving document IDs and document information including words characterizing the contents of the documents as search results;

selecting at least one word from among the received words; and

sending a search request to perform a keyword search in at least one keyword-search-type database using the selected words as a query.

16. A search server that receives a search request from a document retrieval terminal, issues the search request to specified databases, and sends edited search results to the document retrieval terminal, said search server comprising:

summarizing means for creating a summary from words extracted from at least a part of a document when said at least a part of the document is specified as a search term; and

query constructing means for sending the summary created by the summarizing means to a specified associative-document-search-type database as a query.

17. The search server of Claim 16, further comprising:

topic word requesting means for requesting said associative-document-search-type database to create a summary representation of the contents of a document corresponding to a document ID when said document ID is returned from the associative-document-search-type database as a search result, wherein said query constructing means is adapted to send summaries obtained from said associative-document-search-type database by the topic word

requesting means to at least one additional associative-document-search-type databases as a query.

18. The search server as described in Claim 17, further comprising:

search result merging means for merging a plurality of document summaries to create a set of topic words when said plurality of document summaries are returned from an associative-document-search-type database in response to a request from the topic word requesting means.

19. The search server of Claim 16, wherein said search server is adapted to send a document retrieval request to at least one keyword-search-type database and at least one associative-document-search-type database in response to a single search request from the document retrieval terminal.

20. The search server of Claim 16, further comprising:

means for requesting confirmation of a Boolean search request for a keyword-search-type database from the document retrieval terminal before issuing said request to the database.